

"Stay the Course" or "We will never give up until we have achieved victory" or the least excusable "we will stay and achieve victory so that our men and women who have died in Iraq will not have died in vain."

I honor those who are fasting as Gandhi did to bring about the change they believe is essential to preserve the character of this nation and to save the lives of Americans and Iraqis. I wish them great strength and pray with them for peace in Iraq.

JULY 11, 2006.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE, We are a group of concerned citizens who are conducting an open-ended fast in front of the White House calling for our troops to come home from Iraq, and we are asking for your support via the attached form.

The fast, called Troops Home Fast, was initiated by CODEPINK and Gold Star Families for Peace, and endorsed by dozens of organizations. It began on July 4, 2006, and more than 3,500 people in the U.S. and around the world are participating, with hundreds more joining every day. (Additional information about the fast is available at the website www.troopshomefast.org.)

You have the power to enact legislation to achieve the goal of this fast: set a timeline for the withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Iraq and bring the troops home. We deeply appreciate the efforts of members of the House and the Senate who have already been working to end this war.

But Congress is moving far too slowly. Every day, more American soldiers die, more Iraqis die, and more federal funds are squandered which could be used to alleviate a whole host of problems here in the United States.

We all know that a solid majority of the American people now want to bring our military involvement in Iraq to a quick conclusion and bring our troops home. Iraqis are even more adamant about ending the war quickly. A remarkable 87 percent of Iraqis want their government to set a timetable for U.S. withdrawal. Iraq's president, vice president and national security advisor have all called for such a timeline.

Americans who want to end this war have gone through all the traditional methods of petitioning the President and you, our members of Congress, to urge you to act. We have marched, done vigils, written letters, lobbied our representatives, and formed broad-based coalitions in an effort to bring this war to end. Yet the war goes on without end.

That's why we're here now in front of the White House, fasting. Fasting is a time-honored way to move people to action, from Gandhi's nonviolent liberation of India to Mitch Snyder's fasts for the homeless right here in Washington D.C.

We hope you will support our efforts and work with us to bring our troops home—FAST. Attached is a form to record your support. We thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

MEDEA BENJAMIN, JODIE EVAN

AND GAEL MURPHY,

On behalf of Troops Home Fast.

PRESS RELEASE

July 4, 2006.

Cindy Sheehan, Diane Wilson, Dick Gregory, Iraq veterans and Iraqi citizens gather in front of the White House on July 4th, their first day without food.

After eating their final meal in front of the White House yesterday, participants in the "Troops Home Fast"—a historic hunger fast organized by CODEPINK: Women for Peace and Gold Star Families for Peace—will spend their first day without food on the Fourth of July. They will gather at the White House at 10 a.m. and plan to hold a spiritual cere-

mony, send a message of peace to the Independence Day parade, and remain outside the White House with their message to bring the troops home from Iraq now.

Among the Washington fasters are Cindy Sheehan, legendary comedian/civil rights activist Dick Gregory, environmentalist Diane Wilson, former army colonel Ann Wright, Iraq war veterans, Iraqis and Pentagon whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg. They are joined by almost 3,000 others from around the United States and 18 other countries. Celebrities and other well-known public figures have committed to join the fast, including Susan Sarandon, Sean Penn and Danny Glover, musicians Graham Nash and Willie Nelson, writer Alice Walker, and more.

"While others are enjoying their barbecues and fireworks today, we will be going hungry for the most noble cause of all: peace," said Gold Star mother Cindy Sheehan, who began an open-ended fast today. "We are the true American patriots today. Our founding fathers cautioned future generations against engaging in wars of aggression for empire and economic gain, lest we lose our national soul. And the war in Iraq is exactly the kind of war our Nation's leaders once cautioned against."

The hunger strike will continue throughout the summer. "This fast has obviously touched a chord with the public," said CODEPINK cofounder Medea Benjamin. "We thought there might be 3 or 4 of us fasting, and it is more like 3,000. Every day hundreds of new people are signing up for the fast. Some communities are doing rolling fasts, each person taking a day. This is sparking a new level of commitment to get out of Iraq."

For more information, please see www.troopshomefast.org or meet the fasters in front of the White House at 10–11 a.m. or 5–7 p.m.

Support War Resisters! For the first time in the Iraq war, an officer in the U.S. Military, Lt. Ehren Watada, has publicly refused orders and will be brought to court-martial this summer. Click here for ways to show your solidarity and here to read a letter from Carolyn, Ehren's mom, and find out more about his case. You can also support Army Specialist Suzanne Swift, who suffered sexual harassment at the hands of her commanding officers and refused to return to Iraq. Click here for more info.

Declaration of Peace! We urge you to sign The Declaration of Peace, a pledge to take action against the war during September 21–28 if a peace plan is not established by that time. Declaration signers will take part in nonviolent action, marches, rallies, demonstrations, interfaith services, candlelight vigils and other creative ways to declare peace at the US Capitol and in cities across the US. Click here to sign the Declaration and learn more.

Mothers Declare Peace on Mother's Day! CODEPINK's 24-hour Mother's Day peace vigil was an amazing soulful, painful and joyful gathering. Cindy Sheehan, Susan Sarandon, Patch Adams, Dick Gregory, and Iraqi and Iranian mothers joined with mothers and others from all over the country to create a magical pink presence at the White House. Click here to see the media coverage & video, read our blogs and see the most beautiful photos imaginable! And click here to see reports from solidarity events that happened around the country.

CODEPINK Takes Out Ads in Iraqi papers! On Monday, May 15, CODEPINK placed ads in 8 Iraqi newspapers calling for Americans and Iraqis to work together, in a non-violent fashion, to end the occupation and bloodshed in Iraq. People in 99 cities generously funded this ad campaign. The Iraqi response has been tremendous, with hundreds of Iraqis calling the newspapers saying how excited

they are to see this ad and how it gives them great hope. Click here to see the ad. Click here to see the Arabic website Esteklal (which means independence). To see the press release about this ad, click here.

Stop Nuclear War With Iran! We weren't able to stop the last war, but we must stop the next one . . . NOW! The United Nations, which is mandated to uphold international law, must speak out against the Bush Administration's plans. Let's send a collective letter to Secretary General Kofi Annan imploring him to denounce this threat and call for a diplomatic solution. Click here to sign on and/or send your own, and pass it to friends and family around the world. Let's let the Bush administration and Kofi Annan know that the world is demanding an end to this madness!

Support Iraqi Women: The US invasion of Iraq has moved Iraq from a secular to a more religious—and violent—society where women's rights are being curtailed. Read our report Iraqi Women Under Siege and recent articles about women in Iraq. Click here to see the blogs, photos and media articles of the Iraqi Women's Tour to the US. Donate to our efforts to support Iraqi women.

Women—& Male Allies—Say NO To War! Sign here to join women and men from around the world who are coming together to SAY NO TO WAR. We are creating a massive movement crossing generations, races, ethnicities, religions, and borders to pressure our governments, the United Nations, the Arab League, and other international leaders to negotiate a political settlement to the war in Iraq.

Bring Our Guard Home Now! With over 70,000 National Guard troops deployed to Iraq, our homeland has been left vulnerable in the face of natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina. In response, CODEPINK is working with a coalition of peace groups to seek the immediate withdrawal of all National Guard troops from Iraq. At least twelve states are petitioning their governors to bring home our Guard! Click here to find out how you can join this effort and start a working group in your state!

Hurricane Katrina CODEPINK is now in New Orleans, working with the Common Ground Collective, the People's Institute for Survival & Beyond, various grassroots organizations and local neighborhood groups. We are part of an active movement to rebuild and revision the city, standing in solidarity with residents to strengthen their communities and take their cities back! We invite you to come down to participate in this massive and historic effort to rebuild this beautiful city from the bottom up and the inside out. Click here for more info, join our upcoming work brigade this summer and read Dana Balicki's blogs from New Orleans!

THE NEED FOR AN INCREASED NATIONAL FOCUS ON RAIL AND TRANSIT SECURITY

HON. ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 13, 2006

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, the terrible events of 9/11 brought intense scrutiny to security on our nation's aviation system and led Congress to enact significant measures to strengthen security both on airplanes and throughout airports. However, this same level of scrutiny has simply not been extended to the other transportation modes in our nation, particularly railroads and public transit systems.

Even though transit and rail systems throughout the world have been the targets of deadly terror attacks, including the London subway system a year ago this month and the rail system in Bombay, India, just yesterday, the Bush Administration seems guilty of the same lack of anticipatory thinking that plagued our approach to aviation security prior to 9/11.

In fact, as has happened so often in our nation's history, public voices calling attention to the inadequate security provided for railroads and public transit appear to be warning of a problem in plain sight that is essentially being ignored by officials whose basic plan is apparently to hope that nothing happens.

In July of last year, the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security articulated the Bush Administration's general indifference to security on transit systems when he announced that our nation's public transit systems should expect to bear most of the costs of funding security improvements themselves. At that time, the Secretary dismissed the idea that a terror strike on a transit system could produce "catastrophic consequences" by saying "a bomb in a subway car may kill 30 people."

Under pressure, Secretary Chertoff backed away from his statement. However, the Bush Administration appears to have continued its policy of essentially leaving to public transit systems and to railroads much of the financial burden associated with providing any security enhancements on these systems.

Thus, in fiscal year 2006, the federal government appropriated just \$150 million in security grants to be divided among transit intercity passenger rail, and freight rail systems. This is the same amount provided in fiscal year 2005.

In fact, federal grants for transit and railroad security since 9/11 have totaled just over \$550 million. By comparison, the Congressional Research Service reports that the federal government has spent nearly \$20 billion on aviation security since September 11, 2001. As evidenced by this funding disparity, national focus has been almost exclusively on aviation security despite the fact that almost 7 times more people use public transportation on a daily basis than fly on airplanes.

Perhaps not surprisingly given the lack of focus, the inadequacy of federal funding has been accompanied by repeated failures on the part of the Department of Homeland Security to develop comprehensive risk assessments and mode-specific security plans as documented by several GAO studies and now by a study written by the Democratic Members of the Committee on Homeland Security.

I strongly support the Rail and Public Transportation Security Act of 2006, H.R. 5714, as well as other measures that would strength rail and transit security in our Nation. It is simply incomprehensible to me that Congress has not yet considered and passed these measures that would close gaping holes in our transit security system and significantly increase funding for security grant programs.

Mr. Speaker, while it will not be possible to protect our transit and rail systems from every possible terror threat, we are not yet doing all that we can to make these systems as safe as possible. Our failure to anticipate the unthinkable before 9/11 led to the tragic death of 3,000 innocent Americans. It is past time that we act to secure our public transit and rail systems before another unthinkable act leads to the deaths of more innocent Americans.

PERMITTING USE OF CAPITOL ROTUNDA FOR CEREMONY TO COMMEMORATE THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SPEECH OF

HON. STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 10, 2006

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Madam Speaker, this week H. Con. Res. 427 passed the House of Representatives by voice vote. This bill would permit the use of the rotunda of the Capitol for a ceremony to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the Department of Veterans Affairs. I would like to lend my voice to this memorable event.

Madam Speaker, in 1930 President Hoover signed Executive Order 5398 which established the Veterans Administration a ultimately led to the formation of the Department of Veteran Affairs. The VA (as it has affectionately become known) has strived to both honor and serve the men and women who protect one of our Nation's most treasured ideals—liberty. For 75 years, the VA has helped ensure that those who choose to enter the armed services are not forgotten after they honorably serve their country.

For this reason, we should celebrate the concept and accomplishments of the VA. Indeed, the VA is a vital cabinet level department, which oversees an honorable and necessary function of the U.S. Government.

The VA has three branches, which aim to provide a smooth transition for veterans when they return home from active duty. These branches—the Veterans Health Administration, the Veterans Benefits Administration, and the National Cemetery Administration—should be roundly applauded for their service to America's former servicemen and servicewomen.

Beginning in 1946, the VA's health unit, now known as the Veterans Health Administration, has sought to provide adequate health care to injured veterans returning from war, starting with World War II. Throughout the latter half of the 20th century, the VHA expanded into a leading health care provider and now has over 150 medical centers across the country. According to the VA, provided care to more than 5.3 million individuals in 2005.

In addition to providing health care services, the VA, through its Veterans Benefits Administration branch, has provided educational services to veterans, beginning with the passage of the GI Bill in 1944. According to the VA, 7.8 million World War II veterans, alone, benefited from educational opportunities that the bill offered. I also applaud the VA for assisting the families of our fallen heroes, the men and women of our armed services who died in combat fighting for liberty. The VA's National Cemetery Administration should be praised for providing memorials to those veterans who died for our liberty.

Madam Speaker, it is an honor for me to have the opportunity to recognize the VA for what is has and will continue to do for our veterans. As a member of the House of Representatives, I always look to support legislation that honors our veterans. On June 27, 2006, the House of Representatives agreed to H.R. 4843, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2006. H.R. 4843

increases compensation rates to veterans with service-oriented disabilities, and the House of Representatives should be proud of this great legislation.

But, Madam Speaker, on July 19, 2006, when we commemorate the VA's 75th Anniversary, let us not forget that much more needs to be done to pay homage to our veterans, particularly those who are coming home from Afghanistan and Iraq.

Madam Speaker, the VA reported in August 2005 that almost 23 percent of homeless men and women are veterans. Madam Speaker this percentage is far too high and far too shameful.

On a bi-partisan basis, Congress must work with the Veterans Affairs to right this seemingly forgotten atrocity. The men and women who honorably serve our great Nation deserve not only to be treated as heroes in war; they deserve to be treated as heroes when they return home.

The men and women of the U.S. armed services make it possible for us to debate. Madam Speaker, let us not debate the honor veterans deserve.

GLOBAL WARMING: PARTICULARLY HARMFUL TO PEOPLE OF COLOR

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 13, 2006

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD a letter that I received from the United Church of Christ which I believe is worth our contemplation because of its sincere efforts to generate greater awareness and understanding in the international and domestic communities disproportionately affected by current environmental problems.

The earth's climate has changed over the last century. This change has had deleterious effects on the world community, but more so on poor communities who have high concentrations of people of color. Communities of color are burdened with poor air quality and are twice as likely to be uninsured than whites. Yet these communities will become even more vulnerable to climate-change related respiratory ailments, heat-related illness and death, and illness from insect-carried diseases. A study conducted by the Congressional Black Caucus substantiated his claim by pointing out that in every single one of the 44 major metropolitan areas in the U.S., Blacks are more likely than Whites to be exposed to higher air toxic concentrations.

Although people of color are less responsible for climate change, ironically they will be made to suffer the most from it. We should not avoid the issue of race, class and gender when it comes to serious discussions about the environment. The inclusion of race, class and gender doesn't take us away from the issue, but helps make the issue more comprehensive and complete.

The impact of climate change has not been addressed or assessed specifically for people of color. As we continue to seek solutions to this ever growing and changing problem, we must seek to ensure that the rights of all peoples are met regardless of race, class or gender. I enter into the RECORD this letter written